



NEW MEXICO WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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NM sportsmen applaud EPA review of Bristol Bay, Alaska

Anglers, hunters urge agency to stop inappropriate mining there

Albuquerque – The New Mexico Wildlife Federation, along with 24 New Mexico outdoor groups and leaders, thanks the Environmental Protection Agency for its thorough report on the Bristol Bay watershed in Alaska. They also urge the agency to take the next logical step to protect Bristol Bay from inappropriate, mega-mining by crafting restrictions that would prevent toxic materials from migrating into fish-bearing streams and rivers.

The comprehensive science has found that Bristol Bay is a one-of-a-kind fishery on a global scale, with up to 40 million sockeye salmon returning every year. The region currently has a sustainable economy based on healthy lands and waters that would be jeopardized by the proposed Pebble Mine.

“Hunting or fishing in Alaska is on the wish-list of virtually every New Mexico sportsman and woman, and they understand that Bristol Bay is a one-of-a-kind place that must be protected for future generations,” said **Jeremy Vesbach, executive director of the New Mexico Wildlife Federation**. “We hope the Obama Administration will protect these abundant natural resources from mega-mining before it’s too late.”

Twenty-five New Mexico outdoor organizations and sporting goods businesses, including New Mexico Trout, Charlie’s Sporting Goods and Southwest Consolidated Sportsmen, signed a letter urging EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson “to use all the tools at your disposal to protect a sport fishing and hunting destination that is unrivaled in America and perhaps the world, for this and future generations of sportsmen and women.”

“I’ve had the good fortune to fish many places, and there’s no place in the universe like Bristol Bay. It’s not a place you can rebuild once it’s lost,” said **Bob Gerding, radio host and owner of Bob Gerding’s Outdoor Adventures**. “I thank the EPA for its thorough assessment report and hope the agency will take steps to conserve this unique fishery and habitat.”

The proposed Pebble Mine poses numerous significant and potentially long-lasting threats to Bristol Bay’s nine major rivers and a wetland the size of Kentucky. The mine would cover 28 square miles of land, including an open pit 4,000 feet deep and 2.3 miles wide. It would require nine linear miles of earthen dams up to 740 feet high to store and treat 10 billion tons of acid-laced mine waste *in perpetuity*.

Sportsmen working to protect New Mexico’s outdoor way of life since 1914



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“The EPA’s report demonstrates why Bristol Bay must be protected and why Pebble is the wrong mine in the wrong place,” said **Eli Huffman, an Albuquerque resident and owner of Jake’s Nushagak Salmon Camp**. “Bristol Bay’s fisheries generate roughly \$500 million a year for the regional economy and support 12,000 jobs in the commercial and sport fishing industries, as well as countless businesses like mine.”

The EPA can use its power under section 404 (c) of the Clean Water Act to develop specific conditions that would limit or prevent development of mega-scale hard rock mines such as the Pebble project or deny required federal dredge and fill permits for toxic material.

U.S. Rep. Martin Heinrich encouraged EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson to conduct the watershed assessment after hearing concerns from constituents about the potential impact Pebble Mine could have on the world-famous Bristol Bay fishery. In a letter to Jackson, Heinrich noted that “...it is essential to gather and evaluate the best available science before making a decision” on future mining activity in the Bristol Bay drainage. “Should this scientific review determine that pollution from a large scale mine would have unacceptable impacts on water quality and fish stocks, I would support efforts by the EPA to protect Bristol Bay,” he concluded.

The EPA is taking public comments on the [draft Bristol Bay watershed assessment](#) through July 23.

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